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Stefan Wood

Supporting and Empowering Individuals with an Intellectual Disability through Workshops

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<p>Tämän opinnäytetyön päätavoitteena on tarkkailla ja analysoida kuinka työpajat auttavat ja tukevat kehitysvammaisia henkilöitä. Kehitysvammaisuus on osa laajaa henkisten mielenterveyteen kirjoa, jolla voi olla merkittävä vaikutus yksilöihin riippuen siitä, onko kehitysvammaisuus lievä vai vaikea. Suomessa on tapahtunut merkittävää edistystä institutionalisoidusta yhteiskunnasta kohti sisällyttämistä laajempiin yhteisöihin. Työpajat ovat avainasemassa tällaisessa edistyksessä ja niiden panos kehitysvammaisten henkilöiden positiivisen kuvan edistämisessä on ollut merkittävä.</p> <p>Tiedonkeruussa ja datan analysoinnissa käytettiin laadullisia tutkimusmenetelmiä. Tietojen keruu sisälsi havainnot ja haastattelut. Osallistujat olivat kehitysvammaisia, jotka harjoittelivat Lyhty ry: n järjestämässä kahvilapajassa.</p> <p>Tulokset ovat osoittaneet, että työpajat ovat erittäin hyödyllisiä ja niillä on merkittävä rooli itsensä kehittämisessä ja tarjotessaan konkreettista rakennetta päivittäiseen elämään. Osallistujat mainitsivat erityisesti, että työpajassa osallistumisen tärkeys ja sosiaalinen vuorovaikutus heidän näkökulmasta olivat mielenkiintoisia ja he ilmaisivat haluavansa osallistua enemmän. Työpajassa annetun tuen vaikutus vaikutti tärkeältä heidän itsenäisyydelle sekä itseluottamiselle mikä oli ilmeistä, kun osallistujat selittivät, että heille annettiin heidän kykyjensä mukainen vastuu. Lisäksi osallistujat suorittivat lisätuella lisättyä tehtäviä ja osoittivat tyytyväisyytensä tehtävien suorittamiseen. Viime kädessä innostus ja kiinnostus jatkaa harjoittelua työpajassa näyttivät olevan suuri osallistujien keskuudessa. Sosiaalinen vuorovaikutus suuren yleisön kanssa oli myös positiivista ja osallistujat näyttivät nauttivan tästä</p> <p>Yhteenvetona voidaan todeta, että tulokset osoittivat, että työpajoilla on ollut avainasemassa torjunnassa kehitysvammaisten vanhoja väärinkäsityksiä, mikä itsessään on seurausta yhteiskunnan sisäisestä rakenteesta. Vaikka työpajat ovat välttämättömiä kehitysvammaisten integroimiseksi nykyaikaiseen nyky yhteiskuntaan, tarvitaan lisätutkimusta aiheesta, jotta kehitysvammaisten ja suuren yleisön yhteinen osallistuminen olisi mahdollista</p>	
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<p>The main objective of this thesis was to identify what people with an intellectual disability thought of café workshops organized by Lyhty ry. Intellectual disability is part of a wide spectrum of mental disabilities which can have a significant impact on the individual depending on whether the disability is mild or severe. In Finland, there has been significant progress from an institutionalized society towards the inclusion of individuals with an intellectual disability into wider communities. Workshops have played a key role in such progress and their contribution in promoting a positive image of individuals with an intellectual disability has been significant.</p> <p>Qualitative research methods were used in data collection and analysis of the data. Data collection included observation of the workshop and interviews with participants. The analysis was based on feedback given by the participants and their overall impressions.</p> <p>The results showed that workshops were useful and play a significant role in self-development and provide a concrete structure towards daily life. In particular, participants mentioned that the importance of participating in the workshop and the social interactions from their point of view were exciting and they expressed their desire to participate more. Furthermore, with additional support, the participants completed their assigned tasks and exhibited satisfaction of task completion. Finally, enthusiasm and interest towards continuing practicing in the workshop seemed high among the participants. Social interaction with the general public was also positive and participants seemed to enjoy this experience.</p> <p>In conclusion, the results showed that the workshops have played a key role in combating old misconceptions of individuals with a mental disability, which in itself is the result of social construction within society. Although the workshops are essential for including individuals with an intellectual disability in modern contemporary society, more education on the topic is needed so that full inclusion is possible between individuals with an intellectual disability and the general public.</p>	
Keywords	workshop, intellectual disability, empowerment, inclusion

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1 Introduction

Individuals with an intellectual disability (ID) are often disregarded as being second-class citizens who are incapable of contributing to society (Jarvisalo, Andersson, Boedeker and Houtman, 2005). One of the potential issues is that such individuals might face stigma as evidenced by the research of Corrigan et al. (2010, 2012). Although there are developments in Finland suggesting that with efficient and sufficient support, individuals with ID can become productive members of society. For example Kehitysvammaliitto (n.d.) recognizes the need for structural change to meet this need, stating that “The Finnish service and care system for people with intellectual disabilities is undergoing a major structural change. The gradual process of deinstitutionalization will be realized in Finland by 2020.”

Finland has implemented progressive changes from an “institutionally oriented culture” (laitoskulttuuri) to a more inclusive society where people with ID can participate in their community through workshops. The idea behind workshops is to empower individuals to achieve their goals while at the same time provide a public vision to their surrounding social environment.

Individuals with an intellectual disability are defined as people who have limited cognitive and behavioral ability which limits their function in daily life. Intellectual disability is included as being a part of the wide spectrum of mental disability and can range from mild to severe.

The research topic of this thesis is to observe and analyse the impact of workshops on individuals with an intellectual disability. One key theme is exploring how individuals with ID feel about their experience in the workshop.

The workshop type referred to in this research is of the ‘café workshop’ type (kahvilatyöpaja). One of the important justifications for the use of workshops is to provide a forum of intervention to allow people with ID issues the opportunity to enhance their social skills and engage in group interaction (Webber & Fendt-Newlin, 2016).

The research material provides theoretical viewpoints on the importance of having workshops. The essence of this thesis is to provide future professionals and educators with

some insight on how effective workshops can be in empowering participants in workshops.

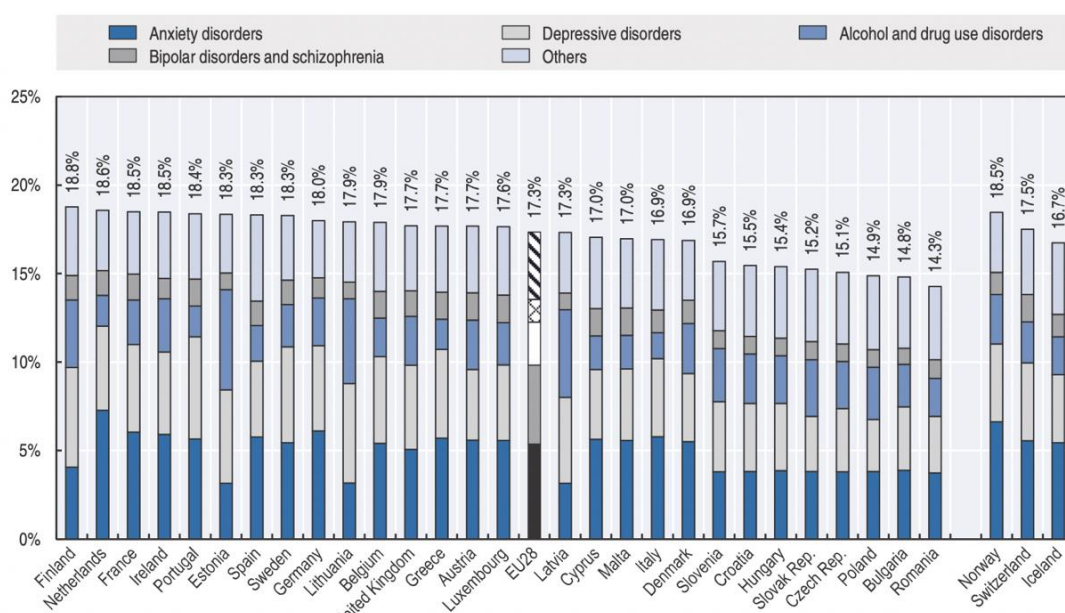
The problem for this research is that there is limited research on the utility of workshops although work by Breuer et al. (2014) and Fernée et al. (2019) give some indication of the value of workshops.

The paper will next present the key aims of the research. This will then be followed by an examination of contextual factors that are important in a consideration of workshops and their impact on people with ID. After which is an overview of theoretical considerations that could be considered when investigating workshops. The rest of the paper will then look at the research aims, methods, results and end with a discussion of the findings and a final conclusion.

2 Contextual Factors

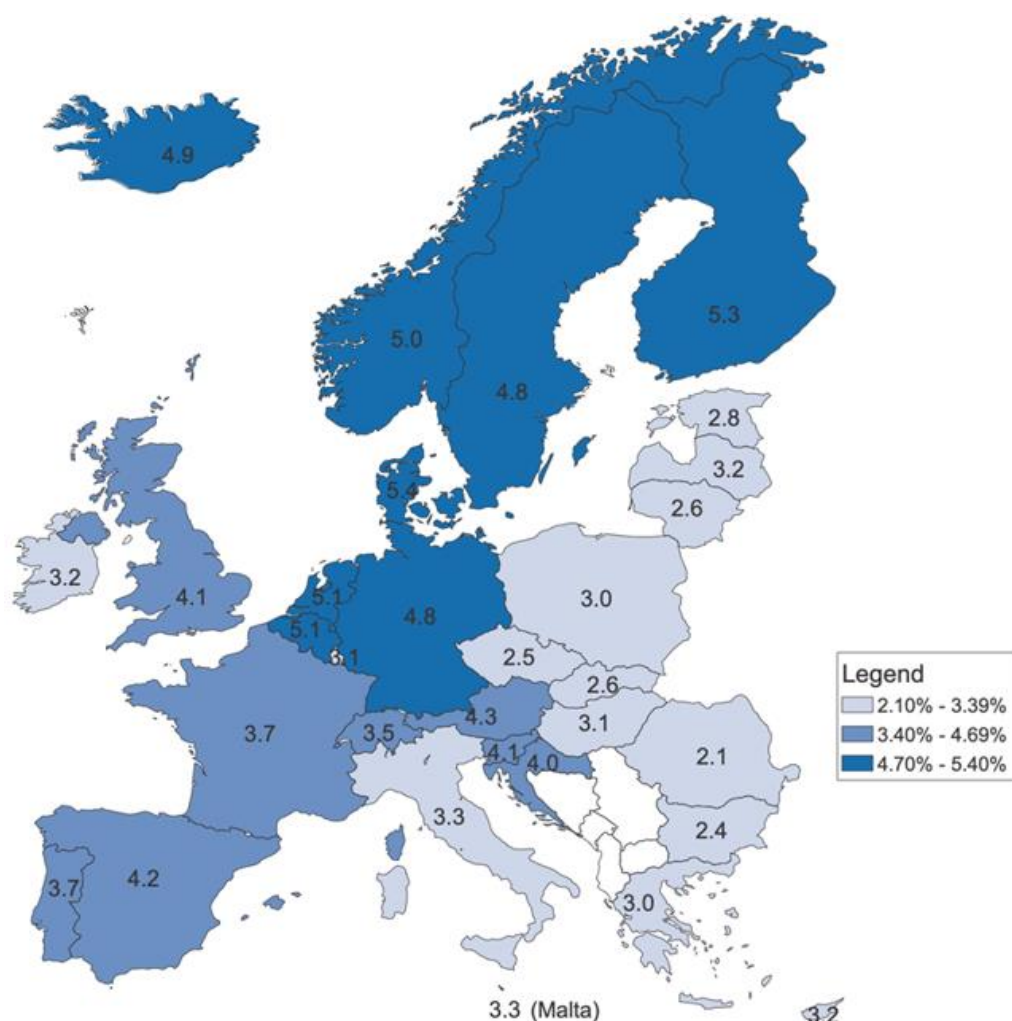
In 2005, Statistics Finland was providing an “Atlas of Mental Health” in Finland (Pirkola & Sohlman, 2005). The OECD has been providing reports on the prevalence of mental disorder in the EU, and Finland stands out as having one of the highest incidences of mental disorder (2014, 2015, 2018). The data in figure 1 is striking.

Figure 1. More than one in six people in EU countries have a mental health problem (OECD/EU, 2018).



Only Norway exceeds the figure for Finland, with Finland having a large percentage of depressive disorders. This has resulted in a significantly high proportion of costs for Finnish society related to mental health care. Estimated direct and indirect costs related to mental health are the highest in Finland at 5.3% as a percentage of GDP in 2015 as seen in figure 2 (OECD/EU, 2018).

Figure 2. Estimated direct and indirect costs related to mental health problems across EU countries.



Finland has seen significant development in combating old misconceptions, although issues relating to the subject still do not receive the proper attention they deserve. Aromaa notes: “persons with mental disorders must not only cope with the psychological, cognitive and biological symptoms of their psychiatric condition but also with many negative consequences that go along with highly prevalent stigma” (2011, p.17).

According to Vesala et al. (2015), many of the explanations why individuals were unable to gain paid employment was resulting from physical and mental restrictions, mental health issues, mood swings and also the increased demand of personal assistance. To address these issues has required significant resources and in recent years the lack of resources provided by municipalities has had an impact. Despite the significant problem mental health care has on Finnish society, Finland is still below the EU average when it comes to public spending on health care as a percentage of GDP (OECD/EU. 2018).

2.1 Lyhty ry.

Studies by the Ministry of Health and Social Affairs have shown that the inclusion of individuals both internationally and in Finland have been developing (Ministry of Health and Social Affairs, n.d.). In 2008 the UN convention introduced the “Rights of Persons with Disabilities” and several countries began to change the way in which rights, laws programs and services were provided (United Nations; Department of Economic and Social Affairs, n.d.). The main principles in Finnish regulation regarding individuals with an intellectual disability have been developed so that individuals have the right to participate in their communities, receive adequate services to assist them in daily life and to promote equality.

According to the Finnish Association on Intellectual and Developmental Disabilities, “it is estimated that there are around 40 000 people with intellectual disability in Finland” (Kehitysvammaliitto, n.d.). Finnish regulation requires that disability services are provided by the municipality throughout Finland. Individuals with an ID are provided services based on their requirements and how much assistance they need. These services include the following; housing services and day activities, family care or institutional care.

To address the concerns of the ID community, Lyhty was founded as a registered non-profit organization in 1993. Lyhty ry is a strong advocate for raising awareness of intellectual disability and the main ethical objective of Lyhty is to work towards increasing the welfare of the intellectually disabled, their relatives and surrounding communities (Lyhty ry, n.d.). It provides supported housing, learning units for young adults, activities in workshops and events and leisure activities.

The organisation aims to develop everyday skills of individuals with an ID and to raise awareness and combating misconceptions regarding the potential of people with ID. To

approach this issue, Lyhty ry has several workshops throughout Helsinki where clients are able to participate in a field that suits their interests. Some of these workshops are located in public areas which brings their activities to public attention.

In one such workshop, clients are able to participate in a café workshop, where clients practice and develop their skills in catering and basic social skills. The value of such a positive environment is that it provides a bridge between individuals with an ID and their immediate local environment. This also allows a forum upon which people with ID can show how they can be productive members of society.

It is also necessary to briefly explain the other workshops which are provided by Lyhty which include a textiles workshop, an outdoors workshop, a culture workshop, a media workshop, a music workshop, a common workshop including the café workshop. The media workshop is a workshop where people with ID who have an interest in the media can develop their skills and their output feeds directly into the media workshops radio station. The culture workshop provides activities in performing arts and cultural events. The textiles workshop, in which participants create and market their products for sale and exhibitions. The participants in the outdoors workshop take care of gardening in small groups and participate in outdoor activities. At the music workshop, individuals are able to participate in musical activities and play instruments according to their skills. The café workshop includes catering and cleaning under supervision. Finally, the common workshop includes janitorial, cleaning and transportation duties according to their own capabilities and wishes emphasizes experiential learning in real-life situations. (Lyhty ry, n.d.).

2.2 Workshops

Workshops are part of a wide range of interventions available to social and health care professionals. Mental health services and treatments have attracted differing levels of attention and investment by different state actors. Despite the problems identified earlier, in a research article by Sadeniemi et al. (2018), the researchers noted that Helsinki had one of the highest levels of resource allocation.

Given that mental health problems are a notable feature of the Finnish landscape, then the country has been innovative in developing different treatments, for instance the Open Dialogue Approach (Dodd, 2015) and online mental health therapy developed via the

Mental Health Hub. The relative value of using workshops compared to integrated employment has been reported by Migilore et al. (2007).

The World Health Organisation has observed that the attitudes of teachers, school administrators, other children and even family members affect the inclusion of children with disabilities in mainstream schools. In terms of employment, misconceptions may also prevail because disabled individuals are often viewed as being unproductive which has an impact on any employment opportunities (Harnois & Gabriel, 2002).

Clearly there are obstacles to paid employment for individuals with an ID. Research by Ahnate et al. (2012) provides an evidential basis for the introduction of workshops and shows that some of the obstacles to inclusion can be overcome by the use of workshops. Whilst research by Breuer et al. (2014) highlights some of the lessons from using workshops in improving mental health care.

One of the key rationales for using workshops is to provide a forum to expand social networks for people with mental health problems. Engagement with others may contribute to the enhancement of social skills and group interaction competencies as reported by Webber and Frendt-Newlin (2016).

Additionally, workshops are seen as an innovative step towards improving employment of individuals with an intellectual disability. Elina Ekholm and Antti Teittinen (2014) suggest that there is a growing number of companies in Finland which, as a part of their diversity policy, have profiled themselves as companies recruiting disabled employees.

It is essential to realise the importance of workshops and their role for participation of individuals with an ID. In this group context, participating in the workshop allows individuals to participate visibly in society and create a space with the general public where learning and experience is possible. It allows social interaction between individuals with an ID and the public and promotes a positive image of individual contributing in their local environment. This remains an important factor because as Ali et al. (2012) points out, potential obstacles for any inclusion might result from stigma. Furthermore, inclusion also means in this context accessibility. The workshop serves also as place to gain valuable information which might be difficult to obtain without support. "Accessible information and communication involve not only things like technical solutions for web services but also

clarity in the contents of the message so that it reaches all users – including people with disabilities" (Kehitysvammaliitto, n.d.).

2.3 Towards Independence

It is essential that professionals working with people with an ID recognize their client's potential and harness their skills to achieve independence. Although living support is essential for many of the clients in Lyhty, clients can achieve a sense of success through small activities which then empowers the client to pursue further activities. This concept of independence for the client is an important characteristic of their work, but there are problems.

The term 'independence' is less straightforward because clients have different limitations and goals are established separately with each client. According to Richard L. Beaulaurier and Samuel H. Taylor, the meaning of the term "independence" is more complex and less obvious when defined and used by members of the disability rights movement. Their usage tends to emphasize social independence and has a meaning closer to self-determination and the ability to "call one's own shots" (Beaulaurier & Taylor 2007, p.75).

The role of social field professionals is important in establishing goals to support the client's self-determination while developing their social skills, but there are significant challenges. In particular issues related to communication and the possibility of misunderstandings is apparent. To work more efficiently with the clients, the professional must also adapt an "educators" role when establishing a working relationship with the clients. "It may also be necessary for social workers to more fully emphasize their role as educators in their work with patients and the teams. Social field professionals need to be attuned to the new realities of life with a disability which make it far less restrictive and offer consumers more life options than were available in the past" (Beaulaurier & Taylor 2007, p.76). To achieve this, Lyhty ry emphasizes the importance of developing a multi-professional working environment so that professionals can adopt different professional competencies while working with clients.

The move towards independence is couched within a social network environment, in this case the café workshop and in so doing the framework is set for instilling a sense of empowerment in the participants.

3 Empowerment

Empowerment does not have a universal definition, “because empowerment is seen as a context related concept that needs to be defined more specifically in different usages” (Törrönen et al. 2013, p.1). In fact, Trevithick notes there is “considerable controversy” surrounding the concept (2012, p. 254). According to Wise (2005), the problem lies in its association with the concept of “power” that many social workers come to question. However, empowerment has become an established feature of social work and the work of Adams (1996) and Gutierrez (1998) as well as the journal *Social Work with Groups* stand out. Whilst research here in Finland on the subject has been led by Maritta Törrönen at the University of Helsinki.

Despite these problems it is necessary to present a tentative outline of what is meant by the concept and the different types of empowerment used in social work. Adams defines empowerment as: “the means by which individuals, groups and/or communities become able to take control of their circumstances and achieve their own goals, thereby being able to work towards helping themselves and others to maximise the quality of their lives” (1996, p.8).

Trevithick sees empowerment in terms of “how to help service users take their lives forward” (2012, p.255). The elements of this have been sub-divided into:

Personal: attitudes, values, beliefs

Interpersonal: knowledge, skills, networks

Socio/Political: individual and collective action (East et al. 2011, p.42).

But Sheppard (2006) sets this within a practical framework, identifying two key characteristics of empowerment – choice and personal growth. Making a choice allows the service user to take control of their decision-making process so that the clients equip themselves to know what is best for them and in this process the social worker becomes the facilitator. Personal growth means “the process by which an individual gains a deeper understanding of themselves than had previously been the case” (Sheppard 2006, p.120). This increased understanding then allows the client to take more control and allow them to realise their potential.

These two factors of empowerment need to be placed within a wider context of empowerment as proposed by Harris (2015, p.9):

Figure3. Different Forms of Empowerment.



Choice and personal growth are obviously located in self-empowerment, but input from the other aspects are important. Here the workshop, other staff and general public might have important influences on the empowerment of the service user. To create an empowering environment, Harris goes on to propose seven key factors:

1. Have clear objectives
2. Enjoy relationships
3. Create networks of empathy
4. Produce a sense of comfort
5. Offer flexible forms of participation
6. Always aim for development
7. Have a perspective of evaluation (2015, p.11).

These factors are useful for both service users and providers to keep in mind when aiming towards empowerment. The link between empowerment and group work is emphasized in Harris' model. This is an essential component put forward by Pernell who maintains that "groups are a natural context for efforts toward empowerment." (1986, p.114) Breton (1994) asserts that social workers developing an empowerment model need to promote a sense of collectivity so that participants have a sense of belonging and have the opportunity to take ownership of their actions, environment and education.

Törrönen (2013) identifies two group types when they are the subject of empowering social work; self-help groups and worker-led groups. Both types of groups can be seen in workshops and empowerment in this group context means to support individuals with an ID which enables them to gain a sense of self-determination and gain the necessary skills to take control of their daily routines.

Lyhty ry has used the café workshop as a realization of the "common third" concept whereby social workers and young adults meet through a common purpose as a basis for empowerment. Achieving this means to find a "common third" which allows for an efficient working relationship between the professional and clients. The "common third" is about finding common interests such as creative methods like art, music or other visual techniques or practical endeavours for the client so that they can gain a sense of accomplishment. It is this sense of accomplishment that empowers the client to realise their true potential (Hatton, 2015).

By providing individual support at the workshop and allowing individuals with an ID to take the initiative, they are able to complete tasks and this gives a sense of accomplishment in the individual and therefore enhances self-development. As a result, the individual with an ID is also able to build a sense of identity. Slade (2009) mentions when approaching counselling, that "relationships are central to identity development" (Slade, p.88). This is important when developing a working relationship between the professional and client because it helps to reinforce positive views of the "self".

In their article, "The Effectiveness of Rehabilitation Interventions on the Employment and functioning of people with Intellectual Disabilities", Nevala et al. (2019) highlight that employment can lead to positive psychosocial and economic benefits for people with Intellectual disability, including a sense of purpose, opportunities for new friendships, health and a better quality of life. If this is integrated with adopting a "common third" approach

then the workshops might be seen as a possible platform to improve work-related skills and employment opportunities.

Despite the limitations and critique of empowerment, it does provide a useful theoretical frame of reference with which to assess the café workshop run by Lyhty ry.

4 Aims of the Study

The central research aim is to analyze how participants with ID experienced and interacted with other community members in café workshops organized by Lyhty ry.

Lyhty ry has a very good reputation for providing adequate and sufficient support for supporting individuals with an ID. The different workshops arranged by Lyhty allows their clients to explore their areas of interest and develop their skills in the area they enjoy. This is essential for their clients to develop not only their skills but also to develop their sense of autonomy and self-development that are essential components of empowerment.

5 Qualitative Methods Applied

Historically, qualitative social work research has gone through various phases as identified by Shaw & Gould (2001).

This study had two phases; the first was observational analysis. As Carr emphasizes:

Considering social work's historical commitment to the person-in-environment on the one hand, and qualitative researchers' attention to the socially embedded nature of social science data on the other, the challenge for qualitative social work research is to connect content – both in the socio-historical contexts in which people speak and in the interactive context of the interview itself. (2010, p.140).

This was important to understand the dynamics and social interactions between individuals with an ID and their social environments and other members of their community. Aside from working with individuals with an intellectual disability, it was important to take enough time to observe the local surroundings and write notes on personal observations. Usually this meant taking time besides working with the clients but it was necessary to observe how the general public approached the workshop. Additionally, it was necessary

to gain as much information of local surroundings and to evaluate how the interviewees felt about their local surroundings and to see if it had an impact on the workshop itself.

The second research method was the use of interview and 7 participants were interviewed face-to-face. Before arriving at the decision to undertake interviews it was important to take into account some methodological considerations. Thyer (2010, chapter 2) proposes that an informed methodology requires identification of domains to explore, in this case the café workshops held at Lyhty ry. And to use specific questions and probes in a more structured format. Tutty et al. (1996) formalizes this in three steps - planning the study, collecting the data, analysing the data.

Shaw and Holland (2014) make interesting reference to other factors that need to be considered in social work qualitative research, especially the potential risks for participants and the challenge of researching one's own professional home territory. They term this 'inside' and 'outside' and this is something they recommend all social workers to be aware of.

Interviews are integral to both social work practice and research and is one of the most important tools in qualitative research. (Tutty et al. 1996) There essentially two types of interview – unstructured and semi-structured. Brewer (2004) adds that “rambling” or the development of the discussion into different areas without prescription is something that should be encouraged by the interviewer as it may give additional insights.

In chapter seven of their work “Doing Qualitative Research in Social Work,” Shaw and Holland (2014) provide an overview of the use of questions. The question format used in the study was based on the use of open questions. This was particularly important, because the level of communication and understanding of the participants with an ID can be challenging.

The questions were designed to be very simple so that the participants could take their time to answer and feel free to ask for clarification if necessary. To ensure a relaxing atmosphere for the participant, it was necessary to explain and assure them that everything said during the interview was not going to be told to anyone else and that they were not being tested or evaluated in any way.

The interviews were conducted in Finnish and took place during the day but in some cases, it was conducted during the morning. All the interviews took about 15-30min per

participant. This depended on the level communication with the client. Afterwards I asked the participant how the interview felt and was it interesting and helpful. I did this to reassure the participant and myself that the interview had been conducted satisfactorily.

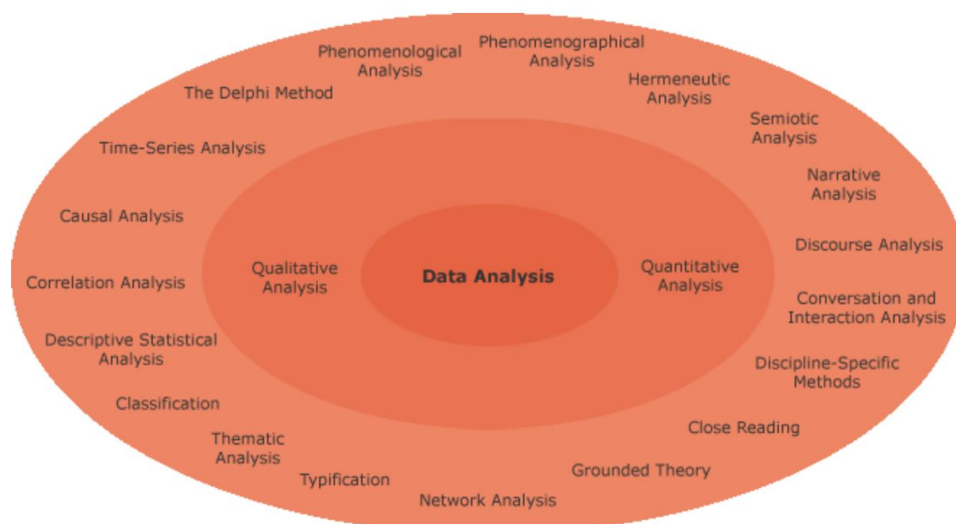
The qualitative research method used required the researcher to be part of the field research itself. The interviews showed the participants were able to be more involved in the discussion and also clarify and explain their answers without having to be confined with simply replying “no” or “yes”. As a final note, like all qualitative analysis, it can be challenging to verify the data as some of the answers in the interview were impossible to verify and this risks bias being introduced into the research method. Consequently, I had to frequently use probes as simple follow-up questions to clarify issues raised and go deeper, a technique that Thyer (2010) emphasises.

The interview questions and the interviews were structured in order to identify the following key themes centered around 16 questions for the participants to answer:

- A. did they feel the workshop was useful?
- B. did it help their social interaction?
- C. did they benefit from the experience?
- d. any other factors?

Each of the above question corresponds to the study aims set out earlier. The design took into consideration the recommendations by Dawson (2007, pp.91-3) that the questions avoided a status bias or potential embarrassment; avoid leading question and avoid sensitive questions. In analyzing the data there are numerous tools to use as can be seen from the Faculty of Humanities overview at the University of Jyväskylä:

Figure 4. Overview of Data analysis Tools.



The output from each interview was evaluated using a narrative analysis that focused on the words (Reissman, 1993) whilst the thematic analysis looked at the themes resulting from the words (Clarke & Braun, 2013). Indeed, Braun and Clark propose that thematic analysis should be one of the first qualitative methods to be learnt “as it provides core skills that will be useful for conducting many other kinds of analysis” (Braun & Clark 2006, p.78). The key point was to identify what the clients were talking about but also to support this by asking follow-up question probes as to how and why they had come to the conclusions and the observations they had made.

6 Results

6.1 Ethical Considerations

While conducting this research, it was imperative to take an ethical and professional outlook when conducting interviews with the participants. First, it was necessary before the interviews began that the participants themselves gave their consent to the interview. In addition, the workers responsible for the participants were informed of the interviews and were asked to give their consent to the interviews in writing.

All those involved in the research were informed that names or recognizable features would not be mentioned in either the interview or in the final thesis. Here data protection was important and confidentiality was guaranteed.

Both parties had to give their consent, if one refused to then the interview did not take place. From an ethical standpoint, it was important to assure both the legal guardians and the participants that their names or any recognizable features be not mentioned in the interview or final report. All the participants were informed what was the purpose of the interview and what the questions were going to be used for. Furthermore, the participants were notified that they could stop the interview at any time, and they could refuse to participate further if they so desired.

All the data collected was not shown to any third parties and a laptop was used to gather data in a secure network. All notes which were written by hand were written up on a laptop which was protected by a password.

Identifying professional ethics was important when conducting this study and while working with the clients. It was important that this study adopted a client centred approach with a strict ethical method as emphasized by Engelbrecht:

“When utilising this approach the social worker acts in a nondirective manner. The client becomes the centre of attention and is accepted unconditionally. The relationship between the worker and the client deserves special attention, as this needs to be a warm relationship in which the client can feel free to discuss his/her problem” (Engelbrecht, 1999, p 82).

Engelbrecht (1999) identifies social ethics as a vital role in the social field. Ethics can be regarded as the operationalization of professional values. This is usually done by means of a code of ethics. A code of ethics only provides a guideline according to which a professional person's behavior can be judged.

In this study, it was also important to reflect and observe what kind of terminology we use when working with individuals with an ID not only for ethical reasons, but also because we need to understand the ideology we are using as a professional. This study has used the term “client” instead of “patient” because the two terms are different and they need to be separated from each other.

As a term, patient is referring or at least implying medical language and therefore implies that a professional is in a doctor's position where he or she has the knowledge or expertise to decide what is the best approach or solution for the patient. From a medical standpoint, the patient is either damaged or deficient and is therefore seeking treatment for

these issues. It is also very important to understand that professionals who adopt a medical language are usually in a position where they are obliged to provide a diagnosis for the patient in order to provide the right form of treatment. As a social field professional, it is crucial to understand this because social field professionals are not qualified to provide any form of diagnosis.

On the other hand, the term client is different because it evaluates problems from a self-development approach. This means that the client themselves have the expertise of what is best for them and social field professionals are there to provide the necessary support. When using this approach, social field professionals do not provide a diagnosis but rather facilitation for persons with an ID to empower them to find methods for directing their own life.

It is also important to understand what disability means as a term. As mentioned in the introduction, intellectual disability means that an individual experiences difficulties in coping with everyday life. Finnish legislation states that disabled people are entitled to fair and equal treatment without prejudice or discrimination.

6.2 Limiting Factors

There were some interesting limitations imposed on the research and this needs to be recognized.

Some of the participants were rather nervous about attending but eventually they were willing to participate in the interview process. Some of the clients at the workshop did not want to participate either because they felt nervous or I was unable to gain their trust within the limited time frame for this study. Some clients also had a less than satisfactory level of communication skills which made interviews rather impossible. The interviews were conducted in secure and safe environments within the workshop vicinity. In all cases the participants were asked if they preferred someplace else, but they explained that the workshop itself was a good place to conduct the interview.

Another impact on the research process was the time and place. The interviews were largely conducted towards the end of July when most of the workshop attendees were either on holiday or were soon going to one. Depending on how they felt about it, it might have had an impact on their behavior while asking them to participate in the interview.

Although the number of interviewees were satisfactory, I was able to engage in a dialogue with the participants and our communication was successful as long as the terminology was simple and concise. But there were instances when some of the participants had difficulties in understanding the question and during such an occasion, I had to clarify the question asked.

The interviewees were randomly selected in the workshop, although the key determination was the willingness of the individual to participate.

6.3 Findings

A constant theme was that participants mentioned the importance of attending the workshop. The interviews lasted with each participant approximately 15-30 min depending on each individual and their level of communication. To summaries the results, this study is going to take three examples from the interviews, which are named participant A, B and C. These were the most receptive of those interviewed and provide some valuable insights. The other participants will be referred to but the substance of their replies were limited.

Participant A, who was the first individual to be interviewed and was happy to participate in the interview and the feedback was positive. Social interaction and socializing were very important to participant A and expressed satisfaction when talking about daily routines at the workshop. Replying to one question, participant A said, "I am very happy to be here. I want to keep working here longer. The best thing about being here is my friends". As everybody else who participated in the interview, participant A had short but concise replies and he clearly understood what was asked. This was a notable feature of all the contributions.

Participant A's interview lasted approximately 20 minutes and he expressed no reservations about doing the interview. Participant A was also very happy with the staff and was happy to see them, saying, "I like working with the staff". When asking at the end of the interview how participant A felt about the questions asked, the reply was, "It was fun, I liked it". These comments of overall satisfaction with the interview and with the workshop were clearly evident. The fact that someone and some organisation was taking an interest was a recurrent theme.

Some hesitation was seen in the initial stages of some interviews. Participant B was unsure in the beginning of the interview but gradually enjoyed participating in the interview. As in all the interviews, it was important to assure the participant that they didn't have to participate and that it was purely voluntary. After repeating this and trying to allay their concerns all participants stepped over this initial obstacle. Participant B opened up and expressed a desire to participate at the workshop because participant B was able to see friends. But this was only revealed after probes concerning the other participants. The questions were sometimes hard for participant B to understand, but after explaining further participant B replied "I like seeing my friends. I like it". This constant re-phrasing and probing was a notable feature of the interview process.

Additionally, participant B as with all the other participants seemed very happy to be at the workshop and clearly enjoyed tasks in the workshop. This was evident in the way participant B replied to the interview questions, "I like working here...I like my tasks ...Yes, I am happy being here."

Several participants expressed their desire to continue participating at the workshop in the future. They saw the workshop as an end in itself as something to work towards although a few, like participant C did say they saw a long-term future.

Unlike participants A and B, participant C was very quiet at first and replies to the interview questions were short and straightforward, although later in the interview participant C became more involved in the interview. This reflected the pattern of most of the interviews. The interview with participant C lasted 23 minutes, which was one of the longer interviews.

Participant C's initial replies to the first four questions were short and required time to think about before answering. Replies to the first three questions were very short and would reply by saying, "It's ok". However, participant C began to express satisfaction when replying to questions regarding the role at the workshop. Participant C was particularly happy when replying to questions 6,7 and 8 and became more social when replying to these questions. At the end of the interview, participant C expressed satisfaction with the experience and said, "I liked the interview, it was nice."

Another theme that emerged was the willingness and desire of some participants to complete their tasks in the workshop without receiving any assistance because they felt that

it was very important to complete the tasks by themselves. One of the participants said that they wanted to participate independently because they felt very happy when they completed the assigned task. One participant said, “I don’t need help, I can do the work by myself.”

One of the participants also emphasised on participating in a public space because catering on people was enjoyable. As mentioned in figure 3 of this study, empowerment can result from the community itself. The participant, here referred to as D, enjoyed small interactions with other people. “It was nice when people say thank you and congratulated me for my work”. Clearly with this form of positive reinforcement, the participant was empowered to continue on given assignments.

During the interviews, it became also evident that the workshop community empowered their clients in achieving their goals. When asked if the workshop was useful and happy place to visit, then all participants replied that it was a positive environment and they enjoyed being at the workshop. For most of the participants, the daily routines were important and they preferred to participate according to the workshop schedule.

Interactions between the clients and the public was an important factor raised in the interviews. They felt that having a workshop in a public space allowed them to show that they were making a contribution both to the workshop and to the wider community. Even though the level of interactive communication between workshop clients and the public was kept to a minimum so that the clients can participate, the clients expressed that they enjoyed participating in a public place. Participant A for instance said, “I like that there are people. I like catering when there is a lot of people.”

One of the key benefits from the interview experience was the impact of the support in the workshop. This seemed important to their autonomy and self-reliance which was evident as the participants explained that they were given responsibility suited to their abilities. Additionally, with the necessary support, the participants completed their assigned tasks and were happy to do assignments that they enjoyed doing.

7 Conclusion

Overall the results were positive and the interviewees were enthusiastic about being part of the interviews. While conducting this study, it was important to observe empowerment

from all aspects including some of the potential problems empowerment might bring to both the professional and client. Based on the study, how we truly empower the clients depends on the social process where empowerment situations are available. Needless to say, empowering another individual usually requires that the person trying to empower the other, is in fact in a more powerful position than the client. The question remains for further studies whether this power play, where the empowerer is in a more powerful position than the to-be empowered client, might have a negative impact on empowering the client. However, there were no signs of these interviews having a negative impact on the clients.

The fact that someone was taking an interest in their day activities and experiences was a notable feature of the workshops. This also seemed to be a pre-condition to allow the client to engage further with the interviewer (Rapley 2004, p.15).

Based on the responses of the interviews, there seems to be clear and genuine interest in workshops provided by Lyhty. Clearly the act of making the choice to participate in the workshop was a rewarding experience. The fact that they thought the experience was important confirmed the value of their decision to attend. In particular, it was notable that many enjoyed the experience. As Sheppard (2006) pointed out this allows the client to take control of the decision-making process. Integrate this with his proposal that personal growth was an important element of the process allowing the service users to get a better understanding of themselves and it is clear from the comments made that this was a notable characteristic. This was realised particularly when the references were made to networking and their interaction with both friends, other service users and staff.

On the two levels proposed by Trevithick (2012) – the personal and interpersonal levels of empowerment, it was clear that the clients felt empowered. On the one hand there was a clear path towards more independence. Yet the reference to friends was important in underlining the collective nature of the experience that supports the point raised by Pernell (1986) on the value of group work.

The participants seemed happy to participate in the given assignments at the workshop such as catering and dish washing. This might sound insignificant to an observer but for the participants, those small assignments when met with success clearly empowered the participants to continue on other assignments. It was also important that the participants

themselves were able observe and realise the achievements resulting from the assignments together their instructor. This clearly supports Trevithick's theory (2012) on empowerment since empowerment can be seen as a process where the capabilities of individuals enable them to make purposive choices and then to transform those choices into desired action. As a result, this in turn enables them to have a better influence on their lives and from there onwards to make decisions which affect them. In this aspect empowerment seen in the participants can be seen as interpersonal empowerment.

How these dimensions appeared in the participants interviews varied. Generally, empowerment in the clients was not seen in a political dimension as proposed East et al. (2011). Based on the responses, empowerment in the clients was seen as a process in which the workshop community had an impact on personal attributes. In the interviews, it was evident that empowerment is considered only from the individual perspective. Arguably, individuals with intellectual disability basically empower themselves through personal knowledge, attitudes, and behavior which could be seen as self-empowering. Based on the theory presented in this study, emphasises that empowerment is the result of interpersonal and collective social empowerment were important empowering clients in the workshops.

Some clients referred to the actual content of the workshops – the catering side and this can be related to the point made by Hatton (2015) on the value of the “common third”. This allowed for a platform on which the clients could engage with work matter and interact with others. This was also allowed the clients to develop a sense of accomplishment that was certainly empowering. It also allows for the service user to develop a positive sense of who they are and in this way goes towards developing a sense of identity that Slade (2009) sees as being important.

But empowerment was seen on multiple levels. Certainly, there was self-empowerment as proposed by Harris (2015). But from the comments it could be seen that there was peer empowerment from the friends they met. There were also elements of system, social and community empowerment when they were involved in group work, engaging with the public and participating within an organizational framework. Clearly the involvement in networking with peers, staff and public was a positive characteristic.

It was also a feature that the clients were polite in the interviews which showed an awareness of social communication skills. Obviously, communication is essential in the real

world and if they were demonstrating it in the interview then they would be able to transfer this into other interactions. The respondents often used politeness expressions, especially at the end of the interview and being positive perhaps reinforced social communication strategies that would allow them to engage in other social encounters outside of the workshop.

The hesitation shown by some to get involved in the interview was observed. This could be related to the nature of the interview itself which some might have found problematical. It could also be related to the Finnish culture of communication. One alternative to this might have been to use written questionnaires and not rely on face-to-face interviews.

It was notable that most of the participants did not see their time horizon beyond the workshop. Given the focus of the study was on the workshop then this is logical but it could have been explored further. Certainly, the workshop was giving the clients a sense of what it was like to practice skills in a public space. If this was the case then the experience might ideally improve their skills in everyday life and would go some way to meeting Nevala et al.'s (2019) observation that this would have an extremely positive effect on the service users and wider society.

Additionally, it seems that the clients thought very highly of the workshop because it provided a sense responsibility and supportive social environment. The topic was complex but for those who were interviewed, it seemed to matter to them because they felt very strongly about the workshop and their daily routines there. None of the participants of the interview disliked the workshop and all of them wished to continue practicing their skills in the future. This could be a positive indication that the workshop is really significant in empowering individuals to achieve their goals with success. Moreover, it was the small tasks which are very important because they brought a sense of accomplishment to the individual which in return provided a solid ground for self-development.

It was clear that having the workshop within the vicinity and centrally located allowed more social interactions between the clients and the public. Furthermore, the workshop provided ideal opportunities to develop future potential projects with local organisations to promote more awareness on intellectual disabilities. As was mentioned earlier in this

study, more work is required to further include individuals with an ID into their local communities. One of the key issues is how to find the right connections which would support clients.

Empowerment and how individuals with an ID thought about the workshops were the key themes of the research aims. Empowerment was seen in how positive the participants felt about the workshop and if they felt they had benefitted from the experience. Participation was seen in whether or not the workshop helped their social interaction. Based on the responses and interviews, it might be ideal to develop additional workshops which are located in spaces where there is social interaction between the clients and the public. One potential innovation could be further collaboration with other organisations which might allow further visibility of workshops.

From the research it is clear that the workshop assisted the empowerment of the participants. However, there were significant limitations in the research process, especially the limitations placed on data collection. The participants were a sensitive target group making it not the easiest group to research. The experience helped me understand some of the significant limitations of qualitative research.

8 Discussion

The objective of this thesis was to analyze how workshops support and empower individuals with an intellectual disability. It was interesting and enlightening to see how the individuals with an ID are able to complete tasks which then encouraged them to continue completing other tasks with success. Although this was not the focus of the study, it was significant to realize how the general public viewed individuals with an ID and feedback and response given was largely positive. This might be an indication of the changing societal view of individuals with ID.

As a social field professional, it is important to recognize one's own cognitive processing and respond to other people's perspective. This was an important factor in the quality of a counselling session because I had to develop a certain dialogue with the client which made a collaboration possible. One of the main lessons from this study is how do we process the situation of the client while addressing our own emotions and come to suitable decisions that benefit all parties. This raises ethical dilemmas in decision-making

because how do we meet the needs of the parties at the same time maintaining professional standards

As a social field professional, we distinguish ourselves from therapists by providing general counselling to the client but even in our profession, it is crucial to recognize the difference between decision-making and giving advice. This is something important to learn especially when working with individuals with an ID. I emphasize this because it reflects on my approach towards working with a client with an ID. While conducting this study, it was necessary to approach several arguments regarding working methods because the wrong approach might hinder any positive development or otherwise attempt for individuals with an ID to find solutions for themselves. In this case I felt that there was significant professional growth. If my client is clearly requiring advice on a matter that I know well about, then what would be the problem of giving advice relating to the issue? Indeed, there are some ethical and professional boundaries to this but if I gave some advice, then I would assume that the clients would feel like that I care for them and this could open new methods of trust and empathetic opportunities. In the end the client makes the attempt to get better by acknowledging two different psychological mechanisms that affect their daily life; self-criticism (to learn to understand when something does not go according plan) and self-care (to improve one's own autonomy and self-determination).

Another important quality for the workshop was the location of the workshop. It was located in Kallio and many customers visit the café. Consequently, individuals with an intellectual disability are able to mingle with the general public and this further develops a more positive image. Although the location of workshop was ideally good, Kallio has a negative reputation for attracting individuals with substance abuse issues. While practicing working outside the workshop, it was important to follow safety precautions. But generally, the area was safe and the location was good for raising a positive awareness of the workshop.

The workshop itself serves as a perfect place to create a sense of community among individuals with intellectual disability. The participants in the interviews seemed to genuinely enjoy being at the workshop and the staff invest a lot of their time and expertise to create a positive and encouraging atmosphere. Many of those who were interviewed explained they were happy to complete assignments with their friends and this was evident while observing their routines. Although there were some incidents where there was

disagreements among the individuals, there was always a solution which was largely due to the professionalism of the staff.

Observing the staff supporting the clients showed a high level of professionalism. The workers were clearly very important in developing a positive atmosphere and this was carried over into the workshops. The management of the workshops and the positive impression given by the interview participants was related in part to the competence of the staff. Clearly the sense of empowerment and inclusion were encouraged by the staff.

Finally, workshops are essential for supporting individuals with an intellectual disability. More attention is required by society to promote a community-based approach to enhance increased participation by people with an intellectual disability. Having access to the workshops allows for a sense of empowerment to be developed by service users and thereby can only serve to benefit all parts of society.

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12 Appendix 1. Interview Questions

- 1) How long have you participated in café workshop? Have you participated in similar workshops before? Kaunko olet ollut kahvilatyöpajassa? Oletko ollut aiemmin samankaltaisissa työpajoissa?
- 2) Do you consider that you are able to accomplish assignments independently or do you need assistance? Koetko, että pystyt suorittamaan tehtävät itsenäisesti vai tarvitsetko ohjaajien tukea tehtävien suorituksessa?
- 3) Have you learnt anything new about yourself? Koetko, että olet oppinut jotakin uutta itsestäsi?
- 4) Has the workshop been helpful in gaining your goals? Onko työpaja hyödyllinen tavoitteiden saavuttamiseksi?
- 5) Are you confident when practicing in workshops? Tunnetko olevasi itsevarma kun suoritat tehtäviä?
- 6) Do you feel happy when completing assignments, or do you have any doubts/regrets? Kun suoritat tehtäviä, niin tunnetko iloa vai surua?
- 7) Do you enjoy participating in workshops? Tykkäätkö olla kahvilatyöpajassa?
- 8) Do you want to continue participating in the workshop? Haluatko jatkaa kahvilatyöpajassa?
- 9) Is the workshop important to you? Koetko, että kahvilatyöpajan toiminta on sinulle tärkeää?
- 10) What do you think your strengths are when completing assignments? Kun suoritat tehtäviä, niin mikä on vahvuutesi ja missä haluaisit kehittyä vielä enemmän?

- 11) Would you recommend the workshop to someone else? Ehdottaisitko työpajaa muille?
- 12) Would you like to try other workshops? If not, then why? Haluaisitko kokeilla muita pajoja? Jos ei niin miksi?
- 13) Do you feel like you are actively in the workshop? Koetko olevasi aktiivisesti mukana työpajan toiminnassa?
- 14) Is there anything you would like to change or add in the workshop? Mitä haluaisit parantaa työpajan toiminnassa? Onko jotakin, mitä haluaisit vielä lisätä tai muuttaa?
- 15) Have you achieved your goals while you have been here? Oletko saavuttanut tavoitteesi työpajan toiminnan aikana?
- 16) Do you like working in a public space? Do you like talking with other people? Onko kivaa työskennellä, kun ympärillä on paljon ihmisiä? Tykkäätkö keskustella ihmisten kanssa?

